

HELEN WILLS, NEW METEOR OF TENNIS WORLD, USES PSYCHOLOGY TO AID HER CLIMB TO FAME

Sixteen-Year-Old Wonder Girl Gravely Applies Philosophy of Mature Years to Improve Her Game and Carry Her to Championship

DOLLS DULL IN 'KID' DAYS; SEWING TOO MONOTONOUS FOR DISCIPLE OF ACTION

Still in High School and Longs for Reopening of Classes—Is Preparing for Artistic Career After College Course

"The girl's a genius!"

From the grateful shade of the clubhouse porch the trained veteran of many a tennis battle gazed out upon two figures in white which flashed across the sunlit turf.

As he watched, one figure leaped backward and upward; there was a swirl of snowy skirt and the flash of a high-swinged racquet, and the crackling applause of an enthusiastic gallery.

"Look at that shot!" invited the veteran, admiringly, slapping his knee.

"Sixteen years old—not out of school yet, mind you—and she can kill a lob like McLoughlin in his palmy days!"

It was of Helen Wills that he spoke, the California schoolgirl who has astonished the tennis world with her phenomenal feats.

Out of the West she has come—demure but redoubtable, to carry her attack to the threshold of the national championship itself!

Through the ranks of the great and near-great women tennis players she has flashed her meteoric way, disposing of the stoutest opposition with apparent ease, meeting skill with skill, pitting speed against speed, and matching the craft of experience with strategy of her own devising.

It took the national women's champion, Molla Bjurstedt Mallory—to beat her. And yet, three years ago she had never held a racquet in her hand, nor in the brief span of her tennis career has she ever known the tutelage of a professional instructor.

Psychological Side of Victory Important

These things—these deeds of which a grown woman might well be proud—have received well-merited acclaim.

But few know of the intellectual and psychological background, the high mental reserve, which forms the base and the foundation of her athletic accomplishments.

For it is no crude physical knack which has made this clear-eyed girl one of the best tennis players in the world in the very morning of her life. Her ability is, rather, the fruit of an exceptionally keen faculty for observation, an indomitable will and an innate sense of the esthetic, whether in the graceful swing of a racquet or the nicely blended shadings of a pastel.

When one learns that the second great interest of her life is art, it becomes easier to understand why and how this untutored tennis tyro has been able to acquire a finish and positive assurance in her game that astounds the critics.

Good tennis, it is admitted, is founded upon a mastery of form, and form in striking the ball depends, in turn, upon grace and fluency of action. Here, then, is the answer in part: Helen Wills, standing enjoyably at the gateway of the tennis world, was able through her instinctive sense of the esthetic to correct to wield her racquet in the easy, graceful manner which form dictates.

This mental aptitude for grace in motion, which latter is one of the most pronounced characteristics of her play, has a powerful ally in a natural ability to observe, which she nurtures by continual practice.

Watches Older Players And Improves Own Game

"I always watch good players closely," she says, "and try to make up my mind what their best points are. When I have decided, I remember these things I've seen and go off and practice them until I can do them."

"That is the best way of learning anything."

"Sixteen years old! This is more the philosophy of thirty."

But it must be realized that Helen Wills, schoolgirl, is the possessor of a character far in advance of her age. Few girls of her years have learned to emulate the calm eye of an expert, to prompt themselves to emulate the virtues and talents of others, to force themselves to the stern task of turning this appraisal to practical account by weary hours of practice.

And for all that, she retains the

young girl in a middie blouse with sun-tanned arms and red lips parted in a half embarrassed smile.

Secluded Life Preceded March Toward Victory

She talks composedly, but with the naivete of her age. She has lived a secluded life for the most part, capped only recently with a whirlwind excursion upon fields as new, in the course of which she has done much and seen a great deal in a very short time.

Small wonder, then, that her speech, reluctant in the presence of strangers, soft and low-pitched and musical, is studded with the names of famous men and famous places, mentioned without ostentation in terms of unstudied familiarity.

In it appear again and again such words as Tilden, Johnston, Forrest Hills, Longwood, Mallory, O'Hara Wood, Patterson, Lenglen, et al., but always with the correct prefix disdained by a fond and familiar public, as though she made the conscious concession of youth to age.

It is always "Mr. Johnston," "Mrs. Mallory," "Miss Lenglen." She speaks with respect of these great ones as a well-bred girl speaks of her elders.

about getting out of it. I have another year at school yet, you know."

Even in this, her avocation, this remarkable young lady has reduced everything to an orderly relationship in her own mind.

"With these two things—tennis and art—to take up my time, I am really occupied ideally," she says, "because, you see, I can do one out of doors and one indoors, so that when the sun shines I have something I love to do, and when it rains I still have something in reserve."

Since she has been East the idea has entered her mind of becoming a student at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, a prospect upon which she looks with favor. However, five years must yet elapse before her scholastic activities come to an end, and much can happen in five years. There are those who predict freely that

her history. "My father is a surgeon, Dr. C. A. Wills. When I was a little girl I had dolls, but I didn't like them much. After they had been all dressed up and arranged and set about in a row they just sat there and I looked at them and they looked at me. They were rather stupid, I thought; not very good companions."

"I love dogs. Dogs are wonderful. I used to run with our dogs for hours over the hills, and we always played together. Then, about three years ago—I was thirteen then—father started to play tennis with me. I liked it so much that we played all the time."

"But father has never had the leisure to play enough tennis to become awfully good, so that I soon got so that I could



be able to study art seriously. You can't learn anything in school, of course. They don't have good enough instructors, for one thing.

"But when I get into the university I'll be able to go about it in the right way. They have a very good department there, and I'll try all the different ways of drawing, such as oils and black and white and pastel, and I'll find out just what suits me. Then I'll go ahead and learn all I can."

"Just now I like design best, and I know just enough about it to know how much there is to learn. I have always

Waiting for her next match



Helen Wills in action

unspoiled atmosphere of youth, red-checked, erect, slender, ready to smile, eager to please.

She has unusual eyes, of a clearness and brilliancy that command the attention at once. Her whole personality is in them and in the delicate brows that arch upward and sweep in clean curves to the temples. They are friendly eyes, intelligent and sympathetic.

But when she plays there is a subtle change. Beneath the low white visor which she wears on the court her eyes take on an extremely intent, concentrated quality. There is that in them reminiscent of an old-time scout, peering from beneath his palm as he sights far across the plain the marauding bands of Indians.

There is nothing hard or hostile in that look; only the narrowing of the attention to the business on hand, the focusing of the powers of body and brain for the combat.

And when in action she betrays the same concentrated vigor in her attack. Serve—return—lob—return—to the net—a swift exchange at point-blank



That, however, is quite in keeping with her general demeanor, which is that of the lady in all ways, for which she has to bless her mother, who accompanies her, and her father, whose medical duties keep him at home.

Mrs. Wills, by the way, is the mother of her daughter to any eye. She has the same erect carriage, the same bright and interested expression, the same level gray eyes. She speaks, as does her daughter, in low tones, full of cadences and surprising little inflections. She is taller, but her step is the light, vigorous step of her daughter. Like her daughter, too, she is a person of unusually quick perception, with a knack of seeing a great deal in one sweeping, all-inclusive glance.

"Only one thing mother has not been able to teach me at all, and that is to sew," says Helen smilingly.

"I never would learn to sew, because I simply can't stand it; it gets me nervous to sit still and lug move the ends of my fingers and think of nothing much."

Likes to Design, Not Sew Her Own Costumes

"But I do love to design my dresses. I would rather work out designs than do any other thing except tennis. I design everything I wear, even if some of my body does see them."

"You see, I have always loved to draw. I feel more natural when I get through at the University of California. I want to go to a great art school and become a great artist. But I suppose I'd better start college before I think

in another three years she will be national champion!"

Tennis and art, then, are her major interests, but Helen Wills is one whose mind ranges everywhere and takes joy in what it finds. She is eager to hear good music and to attend good plays, which are not always available in her native State.

"You see," she says, putting forth her hand in the unconscious gesture which she uses when she is very interested, "out home we do not have symphony orchestras and really first-class dramatic offerings. The stars, I mean, of the legitimate stage do not play on the Coast; they stay in the East."

"I have so wanted to go to concerts and plays while I'm here, but I can't, because I simply have to be in bed by 10 o'clock at the very latest, and that spoils everything."

"After coming all these thousands of miles it would be terrible not to be in good shape to play, wouldn't it? And I know that one can't be in good shape without plenty of sleep. That is the most important thing in keeping yourself in condition—sleep all you can and as early as you can. Don't go to bed late and then make it up by sleeping late in the morning."

"Some day I'll come on East just for a holiday and go to everything, but I can't now. I'm on business—to play the best tennis I know how."

Loth as she is to tell of herself and briefly as she tells it, the amazing story of Helen Wills provides abundant food for thought to those who yearn after achievement.

Dolls Were Too Stupid Even in Her 'Kid' Days

"We live in Berkeley, Calif.," she said when at last induced to speak of

nor would she say anything derogatory to any player, holding to the theory that if one cannot speak well of another it is better to hold peace. Truly, here is wisdom!

She had unstinted praise, however, for Mlle. Lenglen. "She is a very, very good player," she said earnestly. "I think the best woman player I have seen. She is very fast, handles her racquet beautifully and fights hard. She is very graceful, too. I like to watch her play. She plays so very hard and uses so much energy I wonder sometimes whether she does not waste some of it, but she knows tennis, and that is her style of game."

Further questioning elicited the fact, which she had not intended to mention, that within a year she stood on equal terms with most of the men of the club and far outshone virtually all of the women.

"I don't know why it is, but the women haven't much interest in the game out West," she remarked, parenthetically. "Perhaps it's because it's an all-year-round sport there; I don't know. At any rate, Western girls don't take a tenth of the interest in tennis that Eastern women do. Here in the East there are so many good women tennis players that it is confusing to remember them all. There is a great deal more tennis played here, anyway, for that matter."

Likes Eastern Courts Better Than Those in West

"We do not have turf courts in the West, either. At home we play on asphalt courts, which are not nearly so hard as you'd imagine, although harder than turf or clay. We also have cement courts, but I don't like them; they are too hard on eyes and feet."

"What we need out home to develop tennis is more big events, some of the larger tournaments. But, of course, we are too far away for that. California is wonderful, but, of course, most of the people do live in the East."

"In spite of that, we do have some good tennis players, as I think any one will admit."

There was no argument to that and she continued: "Mr. Johnston, who is from the Coast," she gave this item of information with naive gravity, "is the most wonderful player in the world, I think. I have watched him many times, and every time I am surprised at what a wonderful game he plays. I think he is only beaten sometimes by greater speed, but nobody can play as well as he."

Into the treacherous quicksands of comparisons, which she branded as comparisons, she refused to venture. In such matters she preserved a golden silence.

She had unstinted praise, however, for Mlle. Lenglen. "She is a very, very good player," she said earnestly. "I think the best woman player I have seen. She is very fast, handles her racquet beautifully and fights hard. She is very graceful, too. I like to watch her play. She plays so very hard and uses so much energy I wonder sometimes whether she does not waste some of it, but she knows tennis, and that is her style of game."

Further questioning elicited the fact, which she had not intended to mention, that within a year she stood on equal terms with most of the men of the club and far outshone virtually all of the women.

"I don't know why it is, but the women haven't much interest in the game out West," she remarked, parenthetically. "Perhaps it's because it's an all-year-round sport there; I don't know. At any rate, Western girls don't take a tenth of the interest in tennis that Eastern women do. Here in the East there are so many good women tennis players that it is confusing to remember them all. There is a great deal more tennis played here, anyway, for that matter."

"I don't know why it is, but the women haven't much interest in the game out West," she remarked, parenthetically. "Perhaps it's because it's an all-year-round sport there; I don't know. At any rate, Western girls don't take a tenth of the interest in tennis that Eastern women do. Here in the East there are so many good women tennis players that it is confusing to remember them all. There is a great deal more tennis played here, anyway, for that matter."

Here's Real Wonder Girl! Really Likes Her School

"All this time I was at school," she continued, "and that reminds me, I'll be two weeks late for school when I go back."

"You'll hate that, of course?" was the ironic comment.

"Oh, but I will, really," she protested, "because I'll have to make up every little bit of work I've missed. I'd much rather do it in the usual way, it's much easier. You see, I have math and English and chemistry and lots of things which I must learn in order to get into the University, and it's no excuse on a college entrance exam to say that you've been in the East playing tennis. I have one more year at school, and then I'll be a lovely freshman. * * * I wonder what it's like!"

She paused, and it was clear that her mind was basted with those mysterious terrors of the first year of college with which rumor assails the boarding-school senior.

"I don't care, though," she said impulsively. "I'll go through with it, and I'll probably have lots of fun. I'll play a lot of tennis, and I'm going to specialize in art, so that I'll be happy, I'm sure."

"When I get into college I'll really



Waiting for her next match

Looks Younger on Court Than Her Sixteen Years

On the courts she wears a middie blouse and tie, and a short skirt, with her face half hidden by the visor, her smoothly parted hair gleaming in the sun. Thus attired she looks a great deal more youthful than in her other habiliments, and this impression contributes, no doubt, to the amazement with which spectators watch her play. For it is amazing, the spectacle of this slight girl playing with all the finish and power of a man, and a very good man at that. It is a man's game that she plays, learned at the hands of men, stamped with the power and speed of a man.

Looks Younger on Court Than Her Sixteen Years

She holds her racquet easily but firmly in her hand, and she moves it as part of herself. It leaps out on the volley as naturally and smoothly as one would put out his hand to catch a ball. It meets the speeding sphere cleanly and decisively, with unflinching accuracy. There is a small round spot in the center of it, visible when the sun shines upon it at a certain angle—indisputable evidence of a good eye.

She moves about the court smoothly, without those sudden bursts of agonized speed which come of being caught out of position. She thinks as she goes, anticipating her opponent's shots, moving ahead of the ball to the place where it will fall.

And when she drives she puts her shoulder into it, as a man does, shifting her weight from the rear foot to the front as she swings, sending the ball across with plenty of pace and top. She has her feet under her at all

times, and her footwork is phenomenally good.

She plays an aggressive game, carrying the battle to the other side, and trying always to score on every shot. At times she appears suddenly at the net, having worked her way there so smoothly that she is on the spot and in command of the situation before it is well realized that she has deserted the baseline.

Once there she cannot be forced away by lobbing, for she will run back and take the shot on the overhead, still moving backward, and if it be returned, there she is again, on her toes at the net, ready as before. It all gives the impression of a well tempered steel spring, which flies back to its former position as soon as the pressure is removed.

Everything she does in action is graceful. There is no trace of that awkwardness which mars the games of so many, even of the best women players. There is an indefinable polish about her strokes, a little air, if you will, of savoir faire, which reminds one of Norris Williams or Johnston. That she has been able to acquire this finished style in the space of three years is the thing that makes the critics gasp.

Philadelphia Tournament Is Her Real Goal Now

"My great concern now is getting through the junior championships at Philadelphia," she says. "I'm going to play my very best, and just as hard as I know how. After all, that was the real reason I came East, and all these tournaments I've been in so far have been rather in preparation for that."

"I'm going into the doubles, too, with Helen Hooker, who is certainly one of the best girl players I ever saw."

"We're going to play some exhibition matches, also. I don't know just who will play, but I think it will be Mr. Tilden or Mr. Johnston, or somebody like that. This will be a new experience for me; I mean playing for the fun of it, with not much depending on whether we win."

"I'll like that, I know. I never get nervous when I play, but I do feel the strain afterward, especially in the big matches."

"After I had played Mrs. Mallory at Forest Hills, and we had stopped and sat down, I suddenly felt as tired as though I had played all morning. That isn't like me, because I am used to playing long periods at a time, and it doesn't tire me a bit, because I am pretty strong."

"It was just the nervous strain."

It is hardly to be wondered that a sixteen-year-old girl should feel some strain after battling the redoubtable Molla in the finals of the national women's championship; after playing through an entire tournament against the flower of America's women players, and after defeating all she met, including May Sutton Bundy!

It was the latter, by the way, who came East eighteen years ago, at the same age—sixteen years—and won the championship; but it must be remembered that conditions then were far different. Since those days the quality of the competition has increased so fast that there are fifty capable players striving for the crown now where one appeared before.

Stronger Competition Makes Honor Greater

Had that schoolgirl of former years been pitted against such a player as Molla Bjurstedt Mallory, could she have carried off the highest award? It is extremely doubtful, even in the face of the unquestioned excellence of performance which she displays today.

All the more honor, then, to Helen Wills, who took the first set from the great Norwegian at Longwood, and succumbed at Forest Hills only after a brilliantly fought contest which brought those in the stands to their feet again and again.

Never in the history of tennis has a girl of her years faced and conquered such an array of talent; never in the memory of the old-timers has a woman player put up such a splendid battle against the long odds of superior experience and strength.

And many there are who are prone to agree with the dictum of the grizzled veteran, which, after all, is the simplest explanation of it all: "The girl's a genius."

Uncommon Sense : Daily Inspection

By JOHN BLAKE

YOUR physician will tell you that you ought to be "overhauled" at least once a year.

That means submitting to a physical examination which will reveal whether your heart and lungs and digestive apparatus are attending properly to their very important business.

Your dentist asks you to come to him every six months that he may find out if your teeth, which guard the gateway of your digestive tract, are in condition for duty.

If the doctor's inspection discloses anything wrong inside you, he has an opportunity to correct it before it becomes serious.

Your dentist can check a raid by midnight crooks on a tooth and put it in shape to work for you for many years longer.

THAT leaves your mind, for which your organs and your teeth are merely helpers, the only part of your cosmos which has not regular inspection.

It may be gathering the cobwebs of prejudice and wrong ideas.

It may be cultivating habits of thought, which, if uncorrected, by and by will make it utterly useless.

It may be even, functioning in a way that will be actually productive of disease—as for example giving way to fits of anger, which breed poisons in the system or to spells of needless worry which are one of the causes of diabetes.

YET this important and delicate machine—which is you, and upon which depends your service to yourself and to the world—goes without any inspection whatever!

The commander of a military company, if peace or war, holds a minute daily inspection of his men and their arms and ammunition and equipment.

The captain of a ship goes daily over his vessel from the stokehold and engine room to the pilot house and navigating bridge to find out just what shape it is in.

AND the owner of a mind which he expects to bring him to happiness needs to do the same thing.

Looking over your mental equipment every morning, finding out just how fat it is getting, and why, noting bad habits and getting ready to get rid of them will keep you alert and on your toes all day long.

Fifteen minutes a day will do it, and do it well. If you put it off a year, or a month or a week, there will be so much work of renovating to do that it will prove an almost hopeless task.